U.S. Congressman Phil Gingrey, M.D.
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation
Statement on H.R. 2850
The Green Chemistry Research and Development Act
September 04, 2007

Mr. Speaker, as the sponsor of this legislation, I rise today PROUD to support H.R. 285 - the Green Chemistry Research and Development Act of 2007.

First, I want to take this opportunity to thank Chairman Gordon, Ranking Member Hall and all of the Science Committee members and staff who worked hard to bring this important bipartisan legislation through committee and to the House floor today. This legislation has passed the House of Representatives in both the 108th and 109th Congresses, and I hope that the third Congress will truly be the charm and that we see H.R. 2850 quickly passed by both chambers and signed by the President.

Mr. Speaker, chemists can design chemicals to be safe, just as they can design them to have other properties, like color and texture. As chemists design products, and the processes by which those products are manufactured, they can and should factor in the possible creation of any hazardous byproducts.

This technique of considering not only the process in which chemicals are produced but also the environment in which they are created is the basic definition of green chemistry. It is the method of designing chemical products and processes that at the very least reduce -- and at the very best eliminate -- the use or generation of hazardous substances.

Mr. Speaker, the basic idea is this: preventing pollution and hazardous waste from the start of a design process is far preferable to cleaning up that pollution and waste at a later date. Additionally, the innovation created by this enhanced research will subsequently spur economic growth, as developing new products and processes is an integral component of many industries, from fabrics to fuel cells.

Green chemistry doesn't just help protect our environment, it helps protect our workers, too. The conditions under which chemicals are created and used can present many risks to those who work on their production. But if companies utilize green chemistry, the materials they use will be as benign as possible, vastly improving employee conditions.

Unfortunately, despite all of the promise of green chemistry, the federal government invests very little in this area. H.R 2850 works to remedy this by promoting greater federal investment in, and coordination of, this important research area. It does so by establishing a program that coordinates federal green chemistry research and development activities within the National Science Foundation, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Department of Energy.

Make no mistake: greater federal attention will encourage universities and academic institutions around the country to train future workers in this exciting technology. H.R. 2850 will achieve this by

supporting research and development grants to partnerships between universities, industry and non-profit organizations. It will also promote education through curricula development and fellowships that will collect and disseminate information about green chemistry.

In past years, many industries – from chemical companies and pharmaceutical corporations to carpet manufacturers and biotechnology businesses – have endorsed H.R. 2850, showing a broad range of support for the merits of this legislation. This bill is nearly identical to the version passed in the 109th Congress.

The companies and corporations that have voiced their strong support for this bill realize that the advancement of green chemistry is positive for not only their businesses, but also our country's environment, our economy and our nation's citizens.

The American Chemical Society, a nonprofit organization chartered by Congress, stated in support of H.R. 2850 that, "Green Chemistry means continuously improving process safety and resource efficiency leading to reduced cost, waste and environmental impact. It is the ultimate proof that environmental and economic benefit in chemistry can be optimized simultaneously."

Mr. Speaker, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and green chemistry promises a ton of pollution prevention. I urge all of my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.